RANGELAND HEALTH STANDARDS - ASSESSMENT – SANDY SEEDING ALLOTMENT #0218

STANDARD 1 - UPLAND WATERSHED
Upland soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates, moisture storage and stability that are appropriate to soil, climate and landform.

This standard is being met on the allotment.

The Sandy seeding Allotment contains both a crested wheatgrass seeding (1,400 acres) and native range (3,974 acres).
The indicators used to evaluate this standard are Soil Surface Factor (SSF), which documents accelerated erosion; and plant community composition, which indicates root occupancy of the soil profile. Soil Surface Factor (SSF) is an indicator of accelerated erosion and is a method of documenting observations regarding erosion. Of the 5,374 acres in Sandy Seeding Allotment, 1,608 (30%) have an SSF rating of stable and 3,671 acres (68%) are rated as Slight. These ratings indicate the two lowest levels of erosion in this methodology. There are 20 acres of rockland and 74 acres are unknown. A copy of the form used to document SSF is attached (Appendix A, "Determination of Erosion Condition Class").

Another indicator of Upland Watershed condition is plant composition and community structure. Current plant composition is compared to a defined Potential Natural Plant Community for the identified soil type and precipitation zone. Using the 1988 Ecological Site Inventory, the percent of the allotment in each seral stage is summarized in the table below. The 12% of the acres that were in the Early seral stage are areas around the edges of the seeded area that burned, but were not reseeded and are still dominated by cheatgrass These areas are in the rougher terrain and with generally light utilization, grazing has little impact on these areas. As can be seen most of the allotment is in the Mid seral (39%) or Late Seral stage (37%).

Seral Stage	Percent comparability to Potential Natural Community	Percent of allotment in seral stage
Early	0-25%	12% (666 acres)
Mid	26-50%	39% (2,093 acres)
Late	51-75%	37% (1,997 acres)
Rockland		1% (20 acres)
Unknown*		11% (579 acres)

* The unknown acres are the inclusions within a vegetation community that include transition areas and plant communities too small to be mapped separately.

STANDARD 2 - RIPARIAN/WETLAND

Riparian-wetland areas are in properly functioning physical condition appropriate to soil, climate and landform.

The standard is not applicable to this allotment since there are no riparian areas or wetlands found within the Sandy Seeding allotment.

STANDARD 3 - ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES
Healthy, productive and diverse plant and animal populations and communities appropriate to soil, climate and landform are supported by ecological processes of nutrient cycling, energy flow and the hydrologic cycle.
This standard is being met. This allotment is a harsh site but much of the crested wheatgrass area is in good condition.

The Observed Apparent Trend (Appendix B) was determined during ESI and it was static on 61% (3,271 acres) of the allotment, downward on 13 % (679 acres) and upward on 15% (789 acres). There was 1% rockland and 12% unknown. The areas rated by ESI (1988) in downward trend were burned areas outside the seeding that were still dominated by cheatgrass and only had patches of perennial grasses.

There are two photo trend plots in the crested wheatgrass seeding portion of the allotment and both were started in 1969 and photographed through the years. Trend Photo Plot #1 has a static trend with changes in vigor and appearance correlating with precipitation. Trend Photo Plot #2 shows an increase in the amount and the vigor of the perennial grass present. There is also an increase in the number and size of the scattered saltbush plants.

The utilization studies started in the early 1980's and on average one of every three years the utilization on the crested wheatgrass was between 60-70% and in all the other years it ranged between 30-58%. The heavy use was restricted to the crested wheatgrass and occurred during dry years when production was limited and during some years high grasshopper numbers resulted in heavy utilization. The grazing in this allotment is early enough in the season that the crested wheatgrass recovers by the end of the growing season.

Standard three is being met for animal populations. The allotment is supporting the current and proposed number of mule deer and pronghorn antelope identified by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) management plans**.**

Noxious weeds are known to occur in the allotment. Mediterranean sage has been treated in the past and the allotment is monitored annually for new plants. Halogeton is common along the pipeline and along roads, and is under treatment.

STANDARD 4 - WATER QUALITY STANDARDS
Surface and groundwater quality, influenced by agency actions, complies with State water quality standards.

This standard is not applicable to this allotment since there are no 303d listed water bodies within the allotment.

STANDARD 5 - NATIVE, T&E, and LOCALLY IMPORTANT SPECIES
Habitats support healthy, productive and diverse populations and communities of native plants and animals (including special status species and species of local importance) appropriate to soil, climate and landform.

Standard 5 is being met for native, T&E, and locally important species.

There are no known sage grouse leks within the allotment, however, there are numerous identified sage grouse leks and habitat within the surrounding allotments. Sage grouse have been seen using this allotment at different times of the year, but livestock grazing does not appear to be impacting sage grouse use within the allotment. Peregrine falcons have been seen within the allotment, probably from releases from the Crump Lake hack site, however, no nesting occurs within the area. Bald eagles use the area in the winter feeding off dead waterfowl and other carrion.

No special status plants have been found in the allotment and none are suspected.

Current Management and Recent Management Changes

This is a crested wheatgrass seeding that is grazed early in the spring (March-April) and then allowed to rest thru the rest of the growing season. The early use encourages cattle to use the crested wheatgrass and then allows it to regrow thru the summer and fall. The early use also helps keep the cattle off the surrounding native range slopes and as a result there is only slight-light utilization on the native range.

Team Members	**Title**
Les Boothe	Range Management Specialist
Alan Munhall	Fishery Biologist
Vern Stofleth	Wildlife Biologist
Lucile Housley	Botantist
Bill Cannon	Archaeologist
Ken Kestner	Supervisory NRS
Robert Hopper	Supervisory RMS
Erin McConnell	Weed Management Specialist

Determination

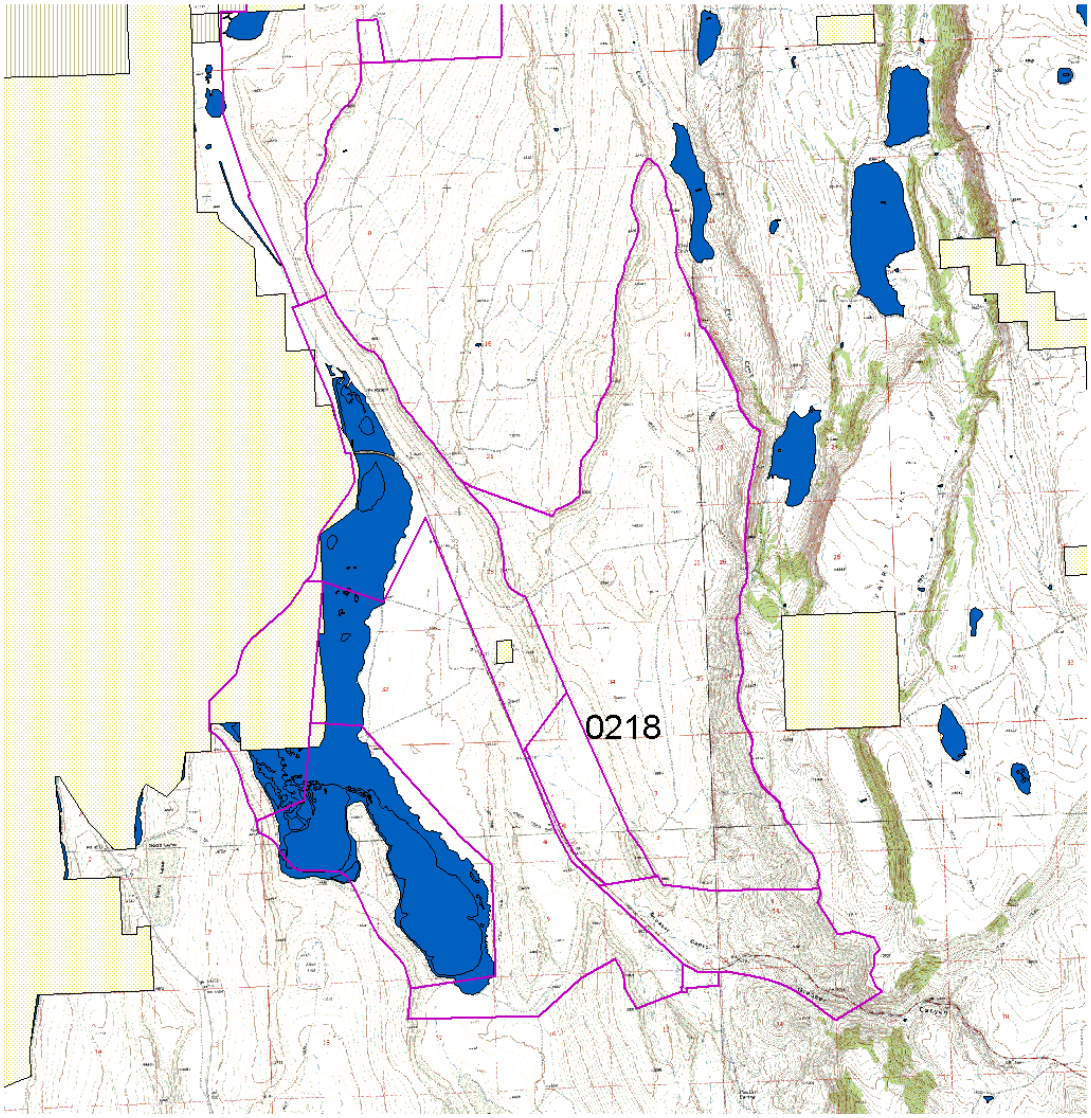
( ) Existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on the Sandy Seeding Allotment promote achievement of significant progress towards the Oregon Standards for Rangeland Health and conform with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

( ) Existing grazing management practices or levels of grazing use on the Sandy Seeding Allotment will require modification or change prior to the next grazing season to promote achievement of the Oregon Standards for Rangeland Health and conform with the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.

_____ _____

Acting Area Manager, Lakeview Resource Area Date

Sandy Seeding 0218



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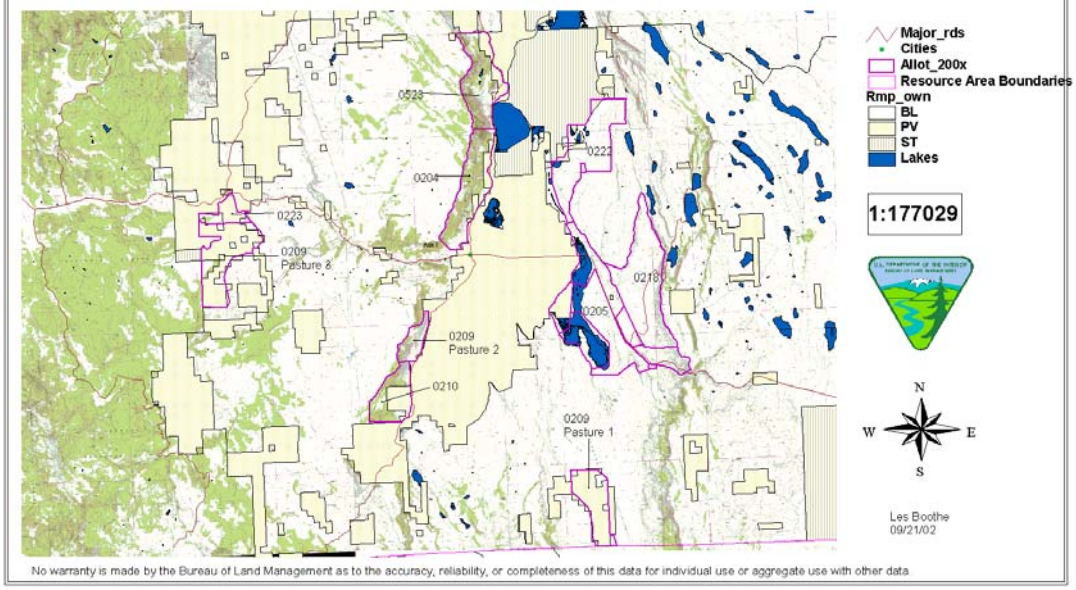
Les Boothe
09/26/02

South WarnerAllotments



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Appendix B. OBSERVED APPARENT TREND

(Check appropriate box in each category which best fits area being observed)

VIGOR (10 Points)		Desirable grasses, forbs and shrubs are vigorous, showing good health. These plants should have good size, color and produce abundant herbage.
(6 Points)		Desirable grasses, forbs and shrubs have moderate vigor. They are medium size with fair color and producing moderate amounts of herbage, some seed stalks and seedheads are present.
(2 Points)		Desirable grasses, forbs and shrubs have low vigor. They appear unhealthy with small size and poor color.Portions of clumps or entire plants are dead or dying. Seed stalks and seedheads almost non-existent except in protected areas.
SEEDLINGS (10 Points)		There is seedling establishment of desirable grasses, forbs and shrubs. Seedlings are present in open spaces between plants and along edges of soil pedestals. Few seedlings of invader or undesirable plants are present.
(6 Points)		Some seedlings of desirable grasses, forbs and shrubs may or may not be present in open spaces between plants. Some seedlings of invader or undesirable plant species may or may not be present.
(2 Points)		Few if any seedlings of desirable grasses, forbs and shrubs are being established. Seedlings of invaders or undesirable should be present in open space between plants.
SURFACE LITTER (5 Points)		Surface litter is accumulating in place.
(3 Points)		Moderate movement of surface litter is apparent and deposited against obstacles.
(1 Point)		Very little surface litter is remaining.
PEDESTALS (5 Points)		There is little visual evidence of pedestalling. Those pedestals are sloping or rounding and accumulating litter. Desirable forage grasses may be found along edges of pedestals.
(3 Points)		Moderate plant pedestalling. No visual evidence of healing or deterioration. Small rock and plant pedestals may be occurring in flow patterns.
(1 Point)		Most rocks and plants are pedestalled. Pedestals are sharped sided and eroding often exposing grass roots.
GULLIES (5 Points)		Gullies may be present in stable condition with moderate sloping or rounded sides. Perennials should be establishing themselves on bottom and sides of channel.
(3 Points)		Gullies are well developed with small amounts of active erosion. Some vegetation may be present.
(1 Point)		Sharply incised V-shaped gullies cover most of the area with most of the gullies actively eroding. Gullies are mostly devoid of perennial plants with fresh cutting of the bottom.

TOTAL POINTS _____ Rating 26-35-Upward; 17-25-Static; 7-16-Downward